

THE

HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

September 2010

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The September luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, September 16, 2010, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The guest speaker will be Richard R. Flowers, Acting Assistant Director and Curator for Beauvoir, who will speak on the house and its extensive restoration since Hurricane Katrina. *Reservations are required* and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call *by noon on Wednesday, September 15*, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-five people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.



Valena C. Jones School

17th ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

Even though October is still a month away, it's time to finalize plans for the Hancock County Historical Society Annual Cemetery Tour. It will be held on Halloween night, Sunday, October 31, 2010, at Cedar Rest Cemetery on Second Street. We will need volunteers to help prepare the cemetery for the tour (mark the path, etc.), to portray citizens buried there, to act as guides, and to serve at the Lobrano House. To volunteer, please call 467-4090

Valena C. Jones School

By
Eddie Coleman

The actual beginning of public education for black children in Bay St. Louis is unknown. We know that in 1892 Valena C. MacArthur became principal of the school for African-American children in Bay St. Louis. It is also a matter of public record that in 1904 \$36 was paid to the People's Be-

nevolent Association for three months rent for the school for black children.

However, the idea of a permanent school for these children seems to have been uppermost in the minds of the leaders within the African-American community. In fact, the Colored Citizens Progressive League was able to raise a portion of the money needed to purchase a house for this purpose. In 1906 the city paid \$3000 for a renovated house which served as the school.

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor
Pat Fuchs, PublisherPublished monthly by the
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Marianne Pluim, Webmaster**LOBRANO HOUSE
HOURS**MONDAY — FRIDAY
10:00AM — 3:00PM
Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)**MISSION STATEMENT**

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

However, the small house was quickly outgrown. Seeing the need for new facilities in 1909, the city began plans for building a new school and purchased a construction site, which bordered on St. Francis Street and Old Spanish Trail, from Miss S. A. Watts. Continuing its support, the Colored Citizens Progressive League contributed "30 large sanitary school desks; 50 medium sanitary school desks; Hansell Chair and 1/2 dozen blackboard pointers." The price was \$400. During these first years the League continued to contribute to supplies and programs for the school and students.

In the succeeding years the city continued to invest in art and music for students in addition to standard and industrial curriculum studies through the purchases of a piano and art supplies.

Ultimately a new and larger school was needed. In the June 17, 1938, edition of *The Sea Coast Echo* a front page headline read, "Making Room for the New, City Colored School Building Demolished to Make Room for \$17,000 Structure." It appears that with the building of the new school it was officially named after Valena C. MacArthur Jones.

However, the question arises: Why did it take another ten years before the school was built and opened to students for the 1948-49 school year? Or was there another school building between 1938 and 1949?

The September 10, 2000, edition of *The Sea Coast Echo*

reports on a reunion held for former students of the Valena C. Jones School. Gloria Payne, a 1948 graduate "recalled attending school in a two story wooden structure that [had] burned down." She also said, "After that, the elementary school students were housed in Mt. Carmel's Church while the older students attended school in the Odd Fellow's Hall. Neither structure still stands." When did this school burn, and for how long did children attend classes in these temporary locations?

In 1947 plans were drawn for a new black high school in Bay St. Louis, and the 1948-49 school year welcomed students into the newly built facilities. The Valena C. Jones School remained in operation until desegregation brought about its closure in 1969.

Since its closing as a school, the building has served as the home of the Hancock County Senior Citizens Group and the Bay St. Louis Fire and Police Departments. However, severe damage brought about by Hurricane Katrina has caused the fire and police departments to move into new buildings.

The school is one of the few surviving examples of a pre-desegregation school in the Gulf Coast area and represents a history that has value to residents and visitors alike. As such, it qualified for an historic restoration grant through the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and the newly renovated building will be used to house the local Boys and Girls Club.



Valena C. Jones
for whom the
Valena C. Jones
public school
in
Bay St. Louis
was named.

When a new high school was built in 1947 to educate black students in the Bay ST. Louis area, it seemed appropriate to name it in honor of a woman whose short, but illustrious, career as a teacher and administrator began here. Mrs. Jones made such an impression on the community that in addition to the school a church has borne her name since 1926: the Valena C. Jones United Methodist Church.

Did You Know This About Hancock County

By
Scott Bagley

Did you know that Cecil B. de Mille, one of the most successful Hollywood directors of the 20th Century, performed as an actor here in Hancock County? Mr. de Mille, who directed many major films, including *The Ten Commandments* [both the 1923 and 1956 versions], was a minor member of an acting stock company that played at the Osoinach Opera House in Bay St. Louis in 1907. The opera house, which was located around the 200 block of South Beach Boulevard, was on the second floor of the Bay Mercantile Company. John Osoinach, who founded the Bay Mercantile Company, decided at the turn of the century to give his fellow townsmen a real opera house and went heavily into debt to construct it on the second floor of his large store. For several years the opera house was a great success, booking and bill-

SOURCES:

- Cuevas, Mike. Director of Cultural Affairs. City of Bay St. Louis. Press Release.
Hancock County Historical Society vertical files
"Valena C. Jones School Reunion 2000: Remembering Those Who Remembered the School." *The Sea Coast Echo*, 10 Sept. 2000, p. 10A.

Valena C. Jones

By
Eddie Coleman

Valena Cecelia MacArthur was born in Bay St. Louis on August 3, 1872, and her teaching career started in rural Mississippi around 1890. She was graduated from Straight College of New Orleans in 1892 and became principal of the African-American school in Bay

St. Louis. Five years later she went to New Orleans to teach in the public school system there.

She retired from teaching in 1901 to become the wife of the Reverend Robert E. Jones, who subsequently became Resident Bishop of the New Orleans area for the Methodist Episcopal Church. However, Mrs. Jones continued to take an active interest in educational activities while helping her husband edit the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*. She died in New Orleans on January 13, 1917, and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery.

In 1918 Mrs. Jones became the fourth black for whom a New Orleans public school was named. It was an elementary school located at 1901 North Galvez Street in New Orleans.

ing many of the fine road shows then touring the United States.

Unfortunately, in the same year that Mr. de Mille played in Bay St. Louis, the Osoinach Opera House burned down in the 1907 fire that also destroyed the Clifton Hotel and St. Joseph's Academy.

Asked years later if he remembered playing in Hancock County, Mr. de Mille replied that he most certainly did. He especially remembered playing in what he called "that brand new Osoinach Theater" and the appreciative and music loving Bay St. Louis audience.

SOURCES:

The Daily Herald. Bay St. Louis Centennial Edition (Biloxi, MS) 29 July 1958: 16A. Print.

Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain.* Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Co., 1999.

The Reopening of the Bay St. Louis Little Theater

The Bay St. Louis Little Theater will reopen after Hurricane Katrina with a gala fundraiser and community day the first weekend in October. Special guests for the event will be Jon Provost and Mary Badham who starred in the movie *This Property Is Condemned*. The movie was filmed in Bay St. Louis in 1965 and used as its main setting the Scafidi House which is the new home of the Little Theater. For more information on the weekend events, please call 228-864-2882 or visit the little theater website at www.bsllt.org.

BOOKS FOR SALE AT LOBRANO HOUSE

Bay Saint Louis: Celebrating the First 300 Years
By the HCHS (\$15.00)

A nostalgic keepsake of the city's history including descriptions and pictures of many of the historic buildings and houses especially those along Beach Boulevard prior to Katrina

*Blueberry Peaches,
Red Robin Pie*

By Stella LaViolette
and Paul Estronza La Violette (\$25.00)
An annotated cookbook of Gulf Coast recipes

Heritage Cookbook
By the HCHS (\$15.00)

A collection of our members' favorite family recipes

Holly

By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)
An intriguing anthology of tales of a tomcat living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

Katrina Cookbook

By Charlet Russell (\$19.95)
A collection of recipes by Bayou Tours

One Dog, Two Dogs, Three Dogs, Four...
By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)

Twice told tales of several dogs living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

Scrapbook of Treasured Memories

By Connie Heitzmann and Betty Stechmann
(\$20.00)

A book of art, photography, and reminiscence of the Gulf Coast

Sink or Be Sunk

By Paul La Violette (\$30.00)

A recounting of the naval battle in the Mississippi Sound preceding the Battle of New Orleans in 1812

Vintage Photographs of Hancock County

By

Lori Gordon

(\$15.00 per photograph)

These photographs come from the vast photographic collection of the Historical Society. Each photograph has been restored and matted by local artist Lori Gordon.

West Side Stories

Before, During, and After on Mississippi's West Coast

Photographs and Commentary by Vicki Niolet and Betty Stechmann (\$28.00)

A Pictorial of our homes and communities in Pass Christian, Bay St. Louis, Waveland, Lakeshore, and Clermont Harbor

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By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)

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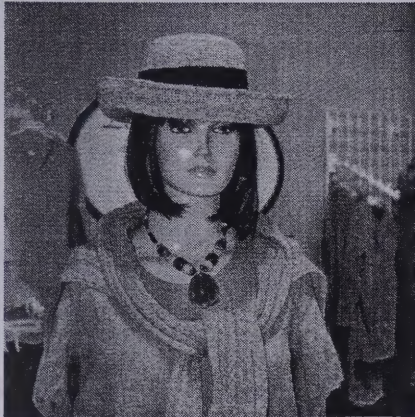
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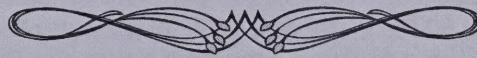
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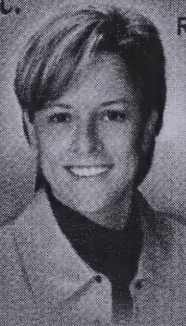
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Stacey Meyer and Troy Gilbert will sign
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New Orleans Kitchens

Friday, Sept. 17:

Ellis Anderson will give a reading from
Under Surge, Under Siege

Please call for reservations because seating is limited.

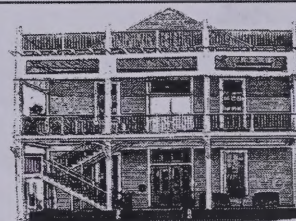
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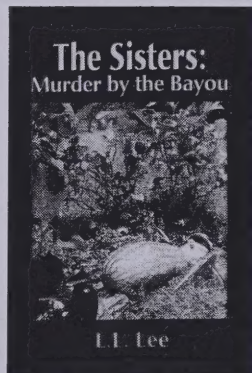
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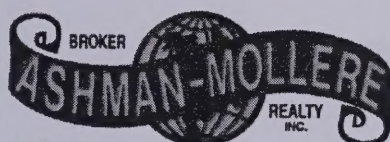
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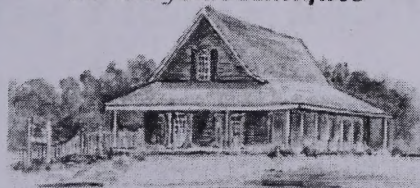
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Bay Saint Louis Little Theatre presents

A Grand Opening of the John F. Holmes Playhouse

featuring

Stars in the movie "This Property is Condemned"

Jon Provost

Mary Badham

Friday, October 1 and Saturday, October 2nd
at the newly renovated playhouse at 398 Blaise Avenue
in the Depot District

Friday, October 1st

- 6:30 pm: Gala with Red Carpet Entrance
Cocktails and Hors d'oeuvres
- 7pm: Introductions and Recognitions
- 7:20pm: Charles Gray – Hancock Historical Society
"History of the Scaffide Building"
- 7:30pm: "This Property is Condemned"
One Act Play by Tennessee Williams ■ Hancock High School Drama Class
Directed by Jay Coker ■ Set design by Bay St. Louis Elementary School
- 8pm: Live Auction
- 8:30pm: Jon Provost and Mary Badham
Share memories of filming in Bay St. Louis
- 9:30pm: Music and dancing with Heather and the Monkey King 'til midnight

Saturday, October 2nd

- 11am: Jon Provost book signing of his bio "Timmy's in the Well"
- 1pm: Kathleen Koch booksigning - "Rising from Katrina"
- 2pm: Tours of the new theater
- 4pm: "This Property is Condemned" - One Act Play by Tennessee Williams
- 4:30pm: Jon Provost and Mary Badham share memories of filming in Bay St. Louis
- 5:30pm: "This Property is Condemned" - One Act Play by Tennessee Williams
- Dusk: Outdoor showing of the movie "This Property is Condemned"
Community invited to theater's backyard. Bring picnic baskets and blankets

Live Auction/Raffle Prizes

Private candlelight dinner/wine for 6 at the Little Theatre served by Sycamore House ■ Weekend at Breezy Porches
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Mary Badham

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at the newly renovated playhouse at 242 Plaza Avenue
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